

Scenic Byways

Indiana has actively participated in the Scenic Byways Program for several years. Originating under ISTEA and expanded under TEA-21, the program recognizes highways that are notable examples of our nation's beauty, history, culture and recreational experience. Because Indiana wants scenic byway designation to mean more than identification by a sign, the Indiana Scenic Byway Program emphasizes the same intrinsic qualities used under FHWA's national program.

Indiana has two officially designated Scenic Byways: the Ohio River Scenic Byway and the Historic National Road. In August 2000, INDOT completed signing of the Ohio River Scenic Byway. A design was selected in the spring of 2001 to identify the Historic National Road in Indiana, and the route signs are currently being manufactured.

The Historic National Road

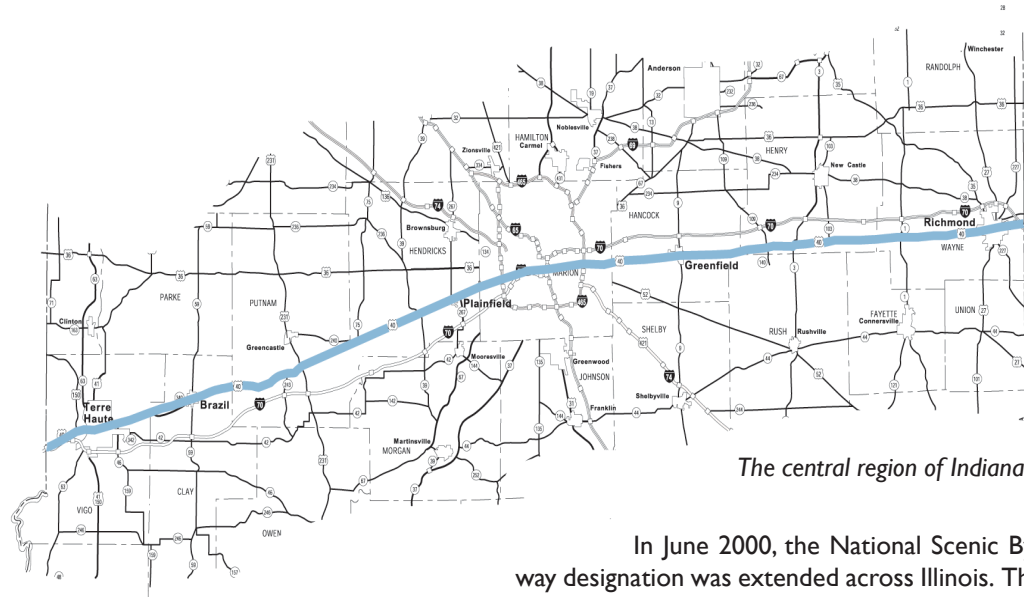


The Historic National Road is a 156-mile, nine-county corridor across central Indiana. Over most of its distance the National Road is signed as US 40, while smaller stretches are signed as state highways and local streets.

Beginning in 1806, during Thomas Jefferson's administration, the National Road was the nation's first interstate highway. Reaching from Cumberland, Maryland to Vandalia, Illinois, this road was originally created to link the eastern seaboard with the western interior. Views along the National Road alternate from agrarian scenes to rural countryside and pike towns, and the state's largest urban area, Indianapolis. Terre Haute and Richmond are also located on the National Road.

The Indiana National Road Association (INRA), a strong and well organized local support group, has worked to increase community awareness and pride in the road, and together with local citizens, they have sought to improve development practices within the National Road corridor. The INRA is committed to the implementation of a quality byway program and preservation of this facility's historic character.

The Indiana National Road was designated a state scenic byway in 1996 for its cultural and historic qualities. In the spring of 1998, INDOT nominated the state byway for national designation, and on June 9, 1998 the Historic National Road in Indiana achieved official designation as a National Scenic Byway.



The central region of Indiana

In June 2000, the National Scenic Byway designation was extended across Illinois. The four eastern states of the corridor are also in various stages of designation for their sections of the National Road. To establish a common thread for prospective travelers to follow, INDOT, the Department of Commerce, the National Scenic Byways Resource Center, the Indiana and Illinois National Road Associations and the Illinois DOT engaged in discussions over route signs for the Historic National Road. The signs will soon appear along the Indiana portion of the byway.

The Ohio River Scenic Byway



The Ohio River Scenic Byway (ORSB) in southern Indiana is a 302-mile route that roughly parallels the famous river that was so key to the early settlement of the continental United States. Most of the route follows state roads, but sections do travel along city streets

and through historic districts in some towns. The ORSB extends from the Illinois to the Ohio State Line and crosses 13 Indiana counties. In 1998, the Ohio and Illinois portions of the Ohio River Scenic Byway joined the Indiana section to form a 967-mile National Scenic Byway.

The Ohio River Scenic Route, Inc., the local support group in Indiana, worked years to establish the scenic byway. Designated a state scenic byway in 1992 and a National Scenic Byway in 1996, the ORSB is based on a strategy for economic development that balances tourism with resource management. While promoting its intrinsic qualities, the local supporters always considers the importance attached to economic development. Settled primarily in the early nineteenth century, the route links river towns as it winds its way through the hilly topography of the region. While the majority of the communities along the route appear unaffected by the global economy, significant economic influence radiates from Cincinnati, Ohio; Louisville, Kentucky and Evansville. Additionally, economic development is evident near the sites where riverboat gaming has been established.

The southern tip of Indiana



For most every community the need for economic development and growth has been at conflict with a profound local respect for the region's natural beauty and tranquil quality of life.

During the past year important progress has been made toward preparation of an interpretive plan for the byway. A firm was selected to prepare an interpretive master plan for the states of Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. Contracts were signed in all three states and work began on the 12-month project. Resource materials have been collected and interpretive sites are being determined. The interpretive plan will help protect cultural, historic and natural resources while enabling travelers to sample the culture and enjoy the diversity and natural beauty of the area. A principal objective of the three states during this effort is

to create a seamless traveling experience.

The most visible evidence of progress along the ORSB is the existence of the scenic byway route signs erected in Indiana during the summer of 2000 along the 302-mile route. INDOT's Seymour and Vincennes District crews installed the signs on designated state highways and provided signs for the appropriate local jurisdictions. Local sources report a dramatic rise in requests for information from prospective travelers since the signs went up. As signs are installed along the ORSB in Ohio and Illinois tourism is expected to grow even more.